AMSAT News Service Weekly Bulletins
Issue: ANS-286 SPECIAL
Date: 1997-10-13
Sources: amsat-ans-1997-ans-286-special.txt

SB SAT @ AMSAT $ANS-286.01
P3D SPECIAL REPORT

HR AMSAT NEWS SERVICE BULLETIN 286.01 FROM AMSAT HQ
SILVER SPRING, MD, OCTOBER 13,1997
TO ALL RADIO AMATEURS BT
BID: $ANS-286.01

During the last couple of weeks there has been quite some media-coverage of ARIANE 502, some of it with very little relationship to the facts. With this release we would like to put an end to some speculations and present the situation as it really exists today.
Until the beginning of this year ESA analyze the flight-records of the ill- fated flight ARIANE 501 and as a consequence, the vibration specifications for AMSAT P3-D were more than doubled on the AR-502 flight.

AMSAT then immediately asked a specialist to analyze the impact of this change. This resulted in a list of modifications required for P3-D, and work was started without delay to implement them.
All flight-ready modules had to be removed from the satellite. The mechanical structure had to be partially disassembled and reinforcements and other components had to be added to harden P3-D for the AR-502 flight environment.

Our schedule of course was delayed by this without our fault and we got out of step with ESA-planning by 4 - 6 weeks.
AMSAT was obliged to inform ESA about this turn of events, and initially ESA accepted this situation since there was also considerable schedule uncertainty concerning the launcher. It was agreed to take a decision in early September.

But in August ESA terminated our contract unilaterally; ESA then maintained that the launch would occur with near-certainty by the end of September.

Our contract now stipulated that AMSAT would have to provide a dummy-mass to simulate the mass of P3-D within the SBS adapter.
Contrary to the contractual requirement, ESA then decided that AMSAT would not have to provide the dummy-mass. The reason probably was that the flight-mass for AR-502 hat been reduced by about the same amount as the mass of P3-D. This was fortunate, because AMSAT thus saved the expenditure for the dummy-mass. But the SBS built by AMSAT remains part of the AR-502 payload. The SBS had been purchased by ESA from AMSAT; this was always planned in this way as part of our contract.
Immediately after the AR-502 launch (now stated as "October 28 at the earliest"), AMSAT and ESA will have enough facts to search for an amicable solution which will guarantee an early launch of P3-D taking into consideration the actual ARIANE flight-planning.

This developments of events of course is very regrettable, but our contract leaves us little choice but to accept initially the above situation. For ESA the successful launch of AR-502 of course has highest priority and precludes any scheduling risks on our behalf.
Unfortunately this means right now a launch delay for us. But we should not forget that 16 amateur-spacecraft were launched on ARIANE which constitutes a record in it's own right of support of our cause.
Thus it would not be helpful to jeopardize the present negotiations by

speculations and expressions of bad tempers. Both sides work very hard
to find an acceptable solution towards a new flight-opportunity for
AMSAT P3-D. We are certain that P3-D will be launched next year on an
ARIANE."

[ANS thanks Peter Guelzow DB2OS for this bulletin.]

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